

## **Grabbed early by vocabulary: Nation's ongoing contributions to vocabulary and reading in a foreign language**

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### **Abstract**

“I was grabbed early [by vocabulary] and never let go. That’s why it’s difficult to explain why I enjoy working in this area. I just love doing it,” said Paul Nation (in Coxhead, 2005, p. 46). How many people get grabbed by an area of research, teaching, and learning that continues to engage interest and cause excitement after 30 years? In this article, I look at Paul Nation’s ongoing contributions to pedagogy in vocabulary and second language reading. I will focus on key questions from Nation’s research that support learning and teaching and contribute to our understanding of the lexical nature of texts.

**Keywords:** vocabulary knowledge, second language reading pedagogy, four strands, fluency, extensive reading

There are several reasons for writing about Paul Nation’s contributions to second language vocabulary and reading. Firstly, Paul’s work has inspired or sparked the research reported in this special issue. Secondly, postgraduate students, language teaching colleagues, and language students have all been party to research into pedagogy either carried out by Nation or inspired by him. A major part of Paul’s contribution to the field is his commitment to developing and supporting new researchers. Thirdly, some readers may be familiar with his work in one area but not others. And finally, Paul is “retiring” in 2010. The inverted commas are necessary because he is continuing to research, supervise postgraduate students, and contribute to the field of applied linguistics in his “retirement,” which means he will be busier than ever.

Narrowing the focus of this article to Nation’s contributions in vocabulary and second language reading is not an easy task. He has a much wider range of interest in applied linguistics and TESOL, with an enviable depth and breadth of experience in research, postgraduate supervision, teaching, and language learning. In the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Victoria University a few years ago, Paul was good-naturedly “asked to leave” a peer support research group after one meeting because he was too productive. His side of the story was that he could have achieved far more in the time it took to attend the meeting. Those achievements would have included mentoring and publishing with many colleagues and postgraduate students, as can be seen in the reference list of this article. Paul’s generosity in this way is legendary.

Paul Nation (also known as I. S. P. Nation) has published a substantial number of vocabulary and reading overviews, from articles in the early eighties and nineties (e.g., Saragi, Nation, & Meister, 1978; Nation & Coady, 1988) through to present day. This list includes Nation's research and pedagogy driven *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary* (1990), one of the first book-length discussions of this area. This book set the benchmark for future publications. It was revised in 2001(a) as *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language* and is soon to be revised again (Nation, personal communication). Nation (2001b), Nation and Gu (2007), Nation (2008), and Nation's (2009) more recent *Teaching ESL/EFL Reading and Writing* (and its sister book *Teaching ESL/EFL Listening and Speaking*, Nation & Newton, 2009) are smaller teaching-based books on vocabulary and learning. Nation has also published several overviews on vocabulary in encyclopedias (Nation, 2005c, 2006b, 2006c). In the preface of *Teaching Vocabulary* (Nation, 2009, p. xi), he writes,

When I first worked on *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary*, the main task was tracking down almost a century of first- and second-language vocabulary research. Now the task is keeping up with what is being produced.

The irony of that statement is that Nation himself is a major contributor to this literature. In this article, we will look at a number of questions related to vocabulary and second language reading posed by Nation and his co-researchers over the last 30 years.

#### *What Principles Can Guide Teachers on Second Language Vocabulary and Reading Pedagogy?*

One of Paul's major contributions to second language vocabulary and reading pedagogy is that he undertakes research and draws on the work of other researchers so that teachers, course designers, and others make principled decisions that ensure the effectiveness of language learning opportunities. For example, his considerable research on frequency of vocabulary leads teachers to making principled decisions about which words to draw attention to. Nation and Crabbe's (1991) survival language syllabus for travelling uses these principles to ensure that today's learning is useful for tomorrow's journey. Paul has also shed light on the multi-faceted nature of the kinds of knowledge required in learning a word. Figure 1 below is adapted from a table in Nation (2001a) and focuses on receptive knowledge of a word. That is, knowledge required for reading and listening.

Form	written	What does the word look like?
	word parts	What word parts are recognisable in this word?
Meaning	form and meaning	What meaning does this word form signal?
	concepts and referents	What is included in this concept?
	associations	What other words does this make us think of?
Use	grammatical function	In what patterns does the word occur?
	collocations	What words or types of words occur with this one?
	constraints of use (register, frequency . . .)	Where, when and how often would we expect to meet this word?

**Figure 1.** Knowledge required for receptive knowledge (adapted from Nation, 2001a, p. 27).

Note the useful guiding questions in the figure for each of the concepts related to form, meaning, and use. The full table in Nation (2001a) includes questions that focus on productive vocabulary knowledge.

Another illustration of Paul's talent for breaking down the teacher's role or tasks into manageable and principled chunks is Nation (2004) on intensive reading and vocabulary learning. In this article, he brings together vocabulary research and ways of dealing with words in texts (e.g., preteaching, giving a meaning quickly, putting it in a glossary, and breaking it into word parts; see pp. 20–21). These techniques are supported by the key concepts of word knowledge for receptive purposes, shown in Figure 1 above. The article culminates in linking reasons for selecting a particular way of dealing with a word to the techniques already discussed. These reasons are divided into three groups; the frequency of words, the importance of a word today for tomorrow's comprehension of a text, and "the learning burden of a word" (p. 28, see also Nation, 2001a, 2006a). Nation ends the 2004 article by saying,

The goal of this article has been to show that the ways teachers deal with words in intensive reading should be guided by principles that reflect the nature of vocabulary and vocabulary learning. To put it another way, if a teacher is asked "Why did you skip over that word?" or "Why did you spend so much time helping learners guess the meaning of that word?", a teacher should be able to indicate the goal of such attention and give sensible informed reasons for choosing a particular option. Vocabulary teaching and learning should not be a random, ad hoc, process, but should be guided by well supported principles. (p. 28)

We can find many such examples of Nation's writing consistently linking research-based findings with clear and concise principles to guide decisions on teaching (see also Nation, 1979a, 1982, 1993c, 1995–1996, 1997a, 2001a, 2003). An early example is Nation's (1979b), aptly titled "The Curse of the Comprehension Question," which begins by looking at good reading exercises and runs through suggestions on ways to create comprehension questions that focus on their job and are specific. This article presents step by step explanations and examples on techniques such as simplification, reference words, ellipsis and finding the main idea in a text. Nation (1984a, p. 61) discusses the importance of drawing learners' attention to "what is being said or to how it is being said" when teaching second language learners to read. His advocacy of avoiding interference when teaching vocabulary shows how he draws on research-based concepts and provides examples of text analysis to support his ideas (Nation, 2000, 2001a). Paul presents complex ideas in clear, easily understandable ways, as we saw in the adapted figure above and by using guiding principles and questions. For a glimpse of where this particular style may have originated, see Nation (1975) on teaching vocabulary in difficult circumstances.

This principle-driven approach to pedagogy comes through in Paul's teaching. In this quote below, Paul (in an interview, see Coxhead, 2005, p. 47.) responds to a question about the strongest argument to convince learners to use direct learning techniques:

The best way to convince learners is to give them a little bit of instruction about how to do it and then make them do it. I do this with my MA students in my Teaching and Learning Vocabulary course. They have to learn fifty words of the survival vocabulary in

a language they don't know. They do it because they have to do an assessed task on it. The task requires them to keep a record of their learning of these words. It blows their mind. They discover that they can learn a lot in a very short time. It usually takes them longer to make the cards than to learn the words. Having done it and seen the spectacular rates of learning, they are well convinced.

Another example that illustrates the importance of principles in Nation's work is a short article called "Ten Best Ideas for Teaching Vocabulary" (Nation, 2005d). Paul's first best idea is to "apply principles of teaching and learning" (p. 5). Three of his next best ideas or principles are to "approach high and low frequency vocabulary differently, use the four strands [and] implement an extensive reading programme" (pp. 5–6). We will look at the first and last ideas later in this article.

### *How Can We Integrate Vocabulary Into Our Curriculum?*

Let's look at the concept of the "four strands" (Nation, 1995–1996, 1996, 1997a, 2001a, 2007b; Nation & Deweerdt, 2001) because it relates to both Nation's work on vocabulary, curriculum design (another substantial area of Nation's research, see Nation & Macalister, 2010), and pedagogy. The four strands comprise three meaning-focused strands called meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, and fluency. In these strands, the main focus is the communication of meaning. The remaining strand is language-focused learning. Nation (2007b, p. 9) apportions equal percentages to each strand in a balanced programme. This means that 75% of classroom time is spent on communicating meaning, and the remaining 25% is given to language-focused learning. He argues that this 75/25 split is important because while language-focused learning is efficient, the other three strands are "more widely beneficial" (p. 8) He also recognises that the balance between strands may vary depending, for example, on proficiency level or curriculum goals.

These four strands create a framework to ensure that vocabulary teaching is approached in a carefully balanced way. They are based on both common sense and research (Nation, 2007b). Among the common sense ideas are the "time-on-task" principle, that is "the more time you spend doing something, the better you are likely to be able to do it" (p. 1) and that "there is something about each of the language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing that makes them different from the others" (p. 2). Nation (2007b) outlines conditions under which each stands exists. Again, the reasoning is clearly laid out and the principles are supported by coherent argument. Some aspects of the four strands are discussed in Grabe on fluency (this volume) and Folse (this volume) on language awareness.

Second language reading fits into several strands. Intensive reading is part of form-focussed instruction, extensive reading fits into fluency, and reading also relates to meaning-focused input (which also includes listening). The key idea in meaning-focussed input is comprehension. Nation (2007b) leaves no doubt as to what he considers to be essential for this strand to exist. He considers it important that learners and teachers know,

Learning from meaning-focused input is fragile because there are only small gains with each meeting with a new word, learning is dependent on the quality of reading and

listening skills, and learning is affected by background knowledge. Because of this, large quantities of input are needed for this strand to work well. (p. 2)

One of the strengths of concepts such as the four strands is the appeal to both the need for research to underpin implications for teaching and learning and for it to make sense to busy teachers and learners. These strands can apply to any language learning situation.

### *What Language Learning Opportunities Arise From Incidental Reading?*

Earlier work by Saragi et al. (1978), the so-called “Clockwork Orange” study, found that native English speakers learned *nadsat* words from reading a novel, showing that incidental learning of vocabulary through reading can occur, particularly when items are repeated (see Horst, Cobb, & Meara, 1998, for a replica study with second language learners). Later work by Nation further contributes to the discussion on incidental vocabulary and second language reading (see Waring & Nation, 2004; Nation, 2001a, 2004). Waring and Nation (2004) write,

Most research we have looked at suggest that learners will learn about 3–6 words per hour of reading. If we assume that a student in school has 3–4 hours of exposure to English each week for 40 weeks a year, and one third of that is reading, this totals about 50 hours of reading per year, or vocabulary growth of between 150 to 300 words per year, not counting natural forgetting from the reading alone. Of course, different programs will have different learning rates and these figures would have to be amended as such . . . Learners would benefit from some combination of direct intentional study to build a larger vocabulary. This would have to be accompanied by adequate reading at the right level and in the right amounts to consolidate and enrich the vocabulary learned from direct learning. (p. 106–107)

Hu and Nation (2000) investigate the density of texts and reading comprehension, finding that, “most learners would need around 98% coverage to gain adequate unassisted comprehension of the text [in the study]” (p. 422). This research has sparked continuing interest in the nexus of reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. Pellicer-Sánchez and Schmitt (this volume) review and present further study on the Clockwork Orange study (Saragi, Nation & Meister, 1978). Horst (this volume) looks at incidental learning through listening.

### *What Is the Nature of Vocabulary in Texts and What Challenges Does It Present?*

We know more about the nature of vocabulary in texts through Nation’s work. A phrase Paul’s students often hear in class is, “Not all words are created equal.” The need to approach high and low frequency differently is a key concept that appears regularly in Nation’s work for teachers and learners (see Nation, 2001a; Nation & Coxhead, 2001; and Worthington & Nation, 1996, for example). The key idea is that high frequency words need to be the main focus for learners initially and that low frequency words should be dealt with using a variety of strategies. Research by Hwang and Nation (1989) looked closely at high frequency vocabulary by comparing an existing list of 2,000 high frequency words (West, 1953) and a list made using corpora. A later study (Hirsh & Nation, 1992) looked at the coverage of the West list over texts written with young native speakers in mind. Coxhead (2000), under Nation’s supervision, looked at the

coverage of this list in written academic texts. While a more up-to-date list of the first 2,000 words is needed, through these earlier pieces of research and later work on creating new word lists based on the British National Corpus (BNC), we have more tools to help define and research texts using this core vocabulary (Nation, 2006a). The BNC lists are available on Paul's website and have been incorporated into the more recent versions of the Range programme (for more on this programme, see below).

In the area of vocabulary in academic texts, we can find the University Word List (Xue & Nation, 1984), Nation's guiding hand in the development of the Academic Word List (AWL; Coxhead, 2000; Nation & Coxhead, 2001), fresh insights and understanding of the nature of technical vocabulary (Chung & Nation, 2003; Chung & Nation, 2004). The vocabulary load in texts in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is the subject of work by Sutarsyah, Nation, and Kennedy (1994; see also Joe, this volume; Nation & Coxhead, 2001). Wang and Nation (2004) look at homographs in the AWL and made several recommendations to amend the list based on their work. Grant and Nation (2006) investigate the nature of idioms. This work is drawn upon in Read and Nation (2004) where the authors discuss challenges in identifying and classifying formulaic sequences. An often quoted article (Nation, 2006a) looks at the vocabulary size needed to read and listen. In this article, readers find answers to questions related to vocabulary and reading such as "How many words do you need to read a novel" (p. 70), "How many word families do you need to read newspapers?" (p. 71), and "How many word families do you need to read graded readers" (p. 72). This work is picked up by Webb (this volume), where the author examines the vocabulary needed to understand two popular television programmes.

### *What Tools Can We Use to Investigate the Lexical Nature of Texts?*

There is a certain amount of what we might call "Kiwi Do It Yourself (DIY)" or "Number 8 wire" skills in Nation's development of a raft of tools to help address pedagogical questions. Nation (2001d) outlines the uses of these tools to investigate issues we have already mentioned above such as the vocabulary size needed to read newspapers (Hwang & Nation, 1989), how accessible novels written for young first language readers are for second language learners (Hirsh & Nation, 1992), as well as the sequencing of graded readers (Nation and Wang; 1999). As Cobb (this volume) explains, Nation has conceptualised and driven the development of several computer programmes for the analysis of lexis in texts. One is Range (Heatley, Nation, & Coxhead, 2002) and another is VocabProfile (Heatley & Nation, n.d.). The programmes use word lists based on word families (see Bauer & Nation, 1993). Speaking from experience, creating word lists is a time consuming and potentially never ending task. To a certain extent, these tools for text analysis were developed for Nation to carry out his own research. But many researchers at different stages in their careers and in a variety of countries have used and honed these tools. For example, Cobb (n.d.) has further developed the Range and VocabProfile programmes on his website, the Compleat Lexical Tutor. Lawrence Anthony (n.d.) has developed and is trialling AntConc using Range and is adding more features to encourage teachers, learners, and researchers to continue investigating and comparing the texts learners read and the texts they produce.

### *How Can We Find Out What Words Learners Know?*

Nation has developed a number of vocabulary tests that are well used throughout the world. These tests have been driven by the needs of teachers and learners. The Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT; see Nation, 1983, 1990, 2001a; Schmitt, Schmitt, & Clapham, 2001), for example, is used to measure receptive vocabulary size at different levels. The format of this test reflects the principles mentioned earlier about high frequency vocabulary. It begins by testing the first 2,000 words, then the third thousand, and so on. The VLT is a valuable research and pedagogical diagnostic tool.

On a personal note, my favourite piece of DIY test development from Nation is the one that tests the vocabulary knowledge of learners with a small vocabulary (Nation, 1993a, 2001a). This test taught me much about using simple visual clues and the first thousand (or possibly 500) words to construct true/false statements. Below is part of the methodology of the test development. This example (Nation, 1993a, p. 195) provides the principle behind the selection of lexis for a test item (the rather friendly looking beagle in the picture was replaced by an Alsatian in a later version of the article).

Occasionally a picture was used to avoid a lower frequency word, for example:

This can keep people away from your house.



Dog is a lower frequency word than the test word keep and so a picture was used instead of saying:

A dog can keep people away from your house.

As anyone who has written a text such as a graded reader using a restricted vocabulary can tell you it is not an easy task. I have never met a teacher yet who doesn't look at this test of the first 1,000 words of English and breathe a sigh of relief.

Nation has examined vocabulary size in other ways. Nation (1993b) looks at using dictionaries to estimate vocabulary size while Waring and Nation (1997) draws together the areas of vocabulary size, text coverage, and word lists. More recent research looks into the development of a range of vocabulary size tests (Nation & Beglar, 2007; Beglar, 2009). These tests use the BNC lists described earlier in this article and work done by Nation (2006a) to throw more light on the size of vocabulary needed to study at university in another language. The size test is currently available in several versions: English, Korean, Mandarin, and Vietnamese with a Thai version being trialled. These developments add depth and breadth to our understanding of the nature of lexical knowledge in more than one language. A further development in vocabulary size tests is Laufer and Nation (1999, 1995) and their work on productive vocabulary size testing and lexical richness. These researchers developed the Lexical Frequency Profile (LFP). Productive

vocabulary size is explored in different ways in this volume by Laufer and Ravenhorst-Kalovski and Meara and Olmos Alcoy.

### *What Do Learners Do to Learn Vocabulary?*

In strategies research, Paul has consistently championed the importance of time to develop and practise strategies. He effectively synthesises and promotes research and direct learning strategies such as word cards and the key word technique (see Nation, 2001a). Other strategies for learning words feature in Nation's work, including learning word parts (see Nation, 1984b, 1990, 2003), using dictionaries to learn language (Nation, 1989, 1993b), and guessing meaning from context (Clarke & Nation, 1980; Liu & Nation, 1985; Nation & Coady, 1988). Chapter 7 of Nation (2001a) is devoted to vocabulary learning strategies and chapter 8 is focussed on strategies for studying words.

In another example of work by Paul and one of his graduate students, Moir and Nation (2002) conducted case studies of 10 language learners and found only one who had developed a principled and well-informed set of strategies for learning vocabulary. This participant, Abdi, illustrated clear understanding of principles such as identifying and filling gaps in his knowledge and the importance of reading widely to both encounter more words in texts and increase his knowledge of the world.

### *What Activities Might Promote More Effective Vocabulary Learning?*

Another prolific area of Paul's contribution is vocabulary and reading is research into pedagogic tasks for language learning. His research inspires other researchers also. Chapter Five of Nation (2001a) contains a section on vocabulary activities to use with reading texts and questions that help analyse these techniques (pp. 159–160). The first question is “What is the learning goal of this activity?” Another question is “What are the design features of the activity which set up the conditions for learning?” Some examples of Paul's work include the intensive reading activities referred to above and experience tasks (Nation, 2007a). Worthington and Nation (1996) examine the sequencing of vocabulary through texts in an EAP course. Matsuoka and Hirsh (this volume) pick up on this thread with their investigation of the learning opportunities presented in an English-as-a-foreign-language textbook. Nagabhand, Nation, and Franken (1993) discuss difficulties presented when a text is “too friendly” for the reader, that is, when the information in a text is supported by examples, narratives, or investigations to such an extent that readers might fail to see what is important in the text.

Research into cognitive processing has influenced Paul's work, such as the Depth of Processing Hypothesis (Craik & Lockhart, 1972; Craik & Tulving, 1975; Baddeley, 1990). Visser (1989), one of Paul's students, created a language focused activity based on the concept of the “core meaning” of a word (see also Nation, 2001a). Visser shows that learners were correct with their guesses of the core meaning of the target words up to 95 percent of the time. This activity combines reading and vocabulary study in an innovative and creative way. With this technique, learners sit together in groups of three. They read through each column together with one person taking responsibility for each column.

Figure 2 below contains an example that is adapted from Visser (1989) using a Sublist One headword from the AWL (Coxhead, 2000) and entries from the *Collins COBUILD Dictionary* (Sinclair, 1995). This adapted example illustrates how easy it can be to develop core vocabulary materials based on Visser's and Nation's work. It can also be easy, as Tom Cobb (this volume) states, to pick up Nation's ideas and operationalise them in different ways.

consistent /kən'sistənt/ adjective	consistent /kən'sistənt/ adjective	What is the core meaning of this word?
<p>Someone who is consistent always behaves in the same way, has the same attitudes towards people or things, or achieves the same level of success in something. Becker has never been the most consistent of players anyway . . . his consistent support of free trade.</p> <p>Is there anyone you know who has consistent good luck?</p>	<p>If one fact or idea is consistent with another, they do not contradict each other. This result is consistent with the findings of another study . . . New goals are not always consistent with the old ones.</p> <p>Tom found that studying vocabulary each night for 3 hours increased his vocabulary by over 40%. Is this consistent with your experience?</p>	

**Figure 2.** Core meaning vocabulary exercise sample (adapted from Visser, 1989; taken from Coxhead, 2006, p. 65).

### *What Can Learners Do to Develop Language Skills Outside Precious Class Time?*

Knowing more about what learners and teachers can do inside the classroom to develop language skills is certainly important, but Nation also looks outside this context to see what learners can do on their own. Graded readers are a serious area of research for Nation because as he says, "There needs to be more hard research on it to balance the justified fervour with which it is promoted" (Nation in an interview, see Coxhead, 2005, p. 52). Paul is a graded reader author (Meister & Nation, 1980, 1981; Long & Nation, 1980). Nation (1997b) looks specifically at the benefits of extensive reading for language learning while Nation (2005b) sets out principles and rationales for extensive reading and vocabulary learning. Nation (1997b) summarises some of these benefits when he writes,

Experimental studies have shown that not only is there improvement in reading, but that there are improvements in a range of language uses and areas of language knowledge. Although studies have focused on language improvement, it is clear that there are affective benefits as well. Success in reading and its associated skills, most notably writing, makes learners come to enjoy language learning and to value their study of English. (p. 16)

Nation (2001c) is concerned with the development and running of an extensive reading programme. A key point from Nation (1997b) is that reading a large amount of material is important in an extensive reading programme (see also Nation, 2009). Nation and Deweerdt (2001) undertake defending simplification as ways to encourage incidental vocabulary learning and fluency in reading. An early article by Wodinsky and Nation (1988) investigates opportunities for vocabulary learning from graded readers by comparing the two graded readers (one of them written by Meister & Nation, 1980, and another from the same series) and an

unsimplified text. This study shows that learners need to know more different words to read the unsimplified text than to read the graded readers and that the unsimplified text has a large number of words that occur only once (42.2%) which limits opportunities to learn through frequent encounters.

Nation and Wang (1999) build a corpus of graded readers to dig further into graded readers and vocabulary development by looking at the amount of reading that should be done at each level of books within a series to encounter high frequency words. Recommendations from this piece of research include that learners should read a book a week and at least five books per level to ensure repetition of high frequency words, that teachers should implement a graded reader scheme because doing so is “an effective means of ensuring that learners meet the high frequency words of a language with plenty of repeated opportunities so that learners have the chance to learn them and to enrich their knowledge of them” (p. 375). Furthermore, publishers of graded reader schemes are provided with several principles for aspects of developing these materials, such as ensuring that simplification is not done at the expense of interest and that vocabulary control is vital (pp. 373–374). One of the final suggestions is an “Oscars” for graded readers (first suggested by David Hill, according to Nation). The Extensive Reading Foundation (ERF), of which Nation is a founder member, have since instituted the ERF Learner Literature Awards (see [www.erfoundation.org](http://www.erfoundation.org)). The yearly awards take into account online voting and comments from readers all over the world as well as the opinions of an international panel of judges.

### *How Can We Promote Fluency in Reading?*

Nation’s DIY approach includes the development of speed reading materials (Quinn & Nation, 1974; Quinn, Nation, & Millett, 2005; Nation & Malarcher, 2007). These kinds of materials relate to the fluency strand mentioned above. Here again we have an example of how Paul develops his own tools to fill a gap in pedagogy and learning. (See Bismoko & Nation, 1974, for an early paper on fluency and reading.) Nation (2005a) and Chung and Nation (2006) evaluate courses in which these materials are used. Macalister (this volume) also looks at a speed reading programme, Gauvin and Hulstijn (this volume) examine reading speed in first and second languages, and Grabe looks at fluency and reading from Nation’s first article in the area (Bismoko & Nation, 1974) to present day (Nation, 2009).

## **Conclusion**

One of the purposes of this article has been to illustrate how Paul Nation is the source of many well grounded, research-based, and commonsense ideas for language teaching and learning. Another purpose is to highlight some of the major questions Nation addresses in his research into second language reading and vocabulary. It is clear that he focuses on building knowledge through methodical research that is centred on the needs of teachers and learners, both inside and outside classroom contexts. The final purpose of the article is to show what can happen when you are grabbed early by an area of research and never let go. Such enthusiasm, professionalism, and ongoing contributions are to be celebrated.

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